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Original Article

You're gonna have to serve somebody: A comparative analysis of the Polish, Danish and Cypriot EU Presidency discourses

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Abstract How do the communicative events of the Trio Presidencies of Poland, Denmark and Cyprus contribute to the reproduction or transformation of the EU's social and political order? This research question is addressed by comparing the discourses of the three consecutive Polish, Danish and Cypriot EU Presidencies in the period between 2011 and 2012, using a Fairclough-inspired analytical framework. The overall hegemonic EU discourses identified in this time period are characterized as follows: 'more Europe' and 'more European integration is the only way out of the economic crisis'. However, the three Presidencies attach different meanings to this discourse. The key order of discourse of the Polish Presidency is "More Europe" safeguards freedom and democracy'; the mantra of the Danish Presidency is "More Europe" through tangible results'; and last, the key order of discourse of the Cypriot Presidency is: "More Europe" through more solidarity and social cohesion'. To a certain extent, these differences in the meaning of the hegemonic discourse reflect the interests and ideological foundations of the national governments responsible for the Presidencies; however, this relationship is far from straightforward.

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Introduction

Do the communicative events of the Trio Presidencies of Poland, Denmark and Cyprus contribute to the reproduction or transformation of the EU's social and



political order? This is the key question posed in this article. Analyses of political discourses with a view to investigating the ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is produced and reproduced have become increasingly common in the field of political science. However, this article is the first to apply discourse analysis to the communicative events of three consecutive EU Presidencies.

The discourses of the EU Presidencies represent an excellent object of study due to the fact that much of the work during a presidency relates to the strategic use of language in a political context (Halperin and Heath, 2012, pp. 307–317). The main tasks of any presidency are to address the fate of old and new legislative proposals relating to evaluations, communications, memoranda and so on. They also include the planning of formal and informal Council meetings and conferences and seminars organized by the Member State responsible for the presidency. These are the occasions during which the presidency discourses unfold.

Research addressing the EU Presidencies has hitherto primarily been concerned with three interrelated questions: (1) How have various presidencies been organized (for example Kirchner, 1992; Coombes, 1998; Corbett, 1998; Neligan, 1998; Whitman, 1998; Elgström, 2003; Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace, 2005; Schout and Vanhoonacker, 2006)? (2) How have they performed (for example Whitman, 1998; Elgström, 2003)? (3) Is the presidency able to exercise political influence by getting the EU to do what the EU would not otherwise have done (Tallberg, 2004; Quaglia and Moxon-Browne, 2006; Warntjen, 2008)? Moreover, a growing number of studies has examined the extent to which the relatively new Trio function established in 2007 has succeeded in making Council work more coherent (Udovič and Svetličič, 2012; Vieira and Lange, 2012; Batory and Puetter, 2013; Jensen and Nedergaard, 2014). Hence, the field has thus far analysed the organizational and behavioural dimensions of individual and Trio Presidencies. This article contributes to the field by studying the communicative dimension via a comparison of the discourses of three consecutive presidencies, namely the Polish, Danish and Cypriot Presidencies, between mid-2011 and the end of 2012. While some discourse analysis has been carried out previously in the field of EU studies (see, for instance, the *Journal of Language and Politics*), this approach has yet to be applied to the EU Presidencies. The article shows how the three Council Presidencies strategically and persuasively deploy communicative events in order to legitimize specific policy initiatives that reflect their national governments' ideological foundations. Hence, discourse analysis can deepen our understanding of the relationships between the EU Member States, their ideological foundations and their responses to the overarching European integration imperative.

The Member States of Poland, Denmark and Cyprus made up the so-called Trio referred to earlier. The fact that they are part of the same Trio means that they share a common overall programme and – to a certain extent – the same European context, since their Presidencies took place in approximately the same time period (Jensen and Nedergaard, 2014); however, they also represent 'eastern', 'northern' and 'southern' views on the Presidency role, respectively. In addition, they represent



large, small-medium and small Member States, respectively; and old (Denmark) as well as new (Poland and Cyprus) EU Members. Finally, they represent a liberal-conservative led government (Poland), a centre-oriented social democratic government (Denmark) and a communist-led left wing government (Cyprus). This variation among the Member States – as well as the fact that their Presidencies took place in the same general time period – renders them well-suited for a comparative discourse analysis aimed at exploring both continuity and change.

The article proceeds with the theoretical framework in the next section, data and methodology are presented after that, the EU Presidency discourses in practice, the Polish Presidency discourse, the Danish Presidency discourse, and the Cypriot Presidency discourse are discussed in the four subsequent sections. The discourses of the Trio are compared in the concluding sections.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in this article is mainly based on the work of Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2003) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999). The basic assumption is that discourse analysis of relevant texts can reveal much about the meaning that political actors assign to the three Presidencies and their respective social contexts (cf. Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003, p. 21). We also assume that the discourses are not a straightforward reflection of the social, political and economic context (for example ideology and economic interest). In keeping with the Althusserian (1969) tradition, we avoid this kind of determinism by assuming that the discourses are relatively autonomous.

Fairclough belongs to the branch of discourse theory known as critical discourse analysis, where ‘critical’ primarily concerns the view that language is studied in relation to power, hegemony and ideology (Fairclough, 1995, p. 1). Separating this school from other schools of discourse analysis is the particular focus on language and the concrete linguistic analysis of how language is used in social interaction. As such, discourse is simply a form of social practice that occurs in a dialectic relationship with other social practices (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 2–3).

A key concept in Faircloughian discourse analysis is the *order of discourse*. ‘An order of discourse is a network of social practices in its language aspect’ (Fairclough, 2003, p. 24), and it comprises the different discourses and genres related to them. Discourse analysis oscillates between a focus on specific texts and a focus on the order of discourse (Fairclough, 2003, p. 3). Genres are particular conventions such as style, mode and activity type (Fairclough, 1995, pp. 13–14). It is assumed that not all potential participants have equal access to make decisions about the content of a particular order of discourse. Conversely, members (and in particular leaders) of more powerful social groups have more or less exclusive control over the discourse within their domain (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 356). Consequently, the concept of



hegemony can be used when analysing orders of discourse (Fairclough, 1992). 'Seeking hegemony is a matter of seeking to universalize particular meanings in the service of achieving and maintaining dominance, and this is ideological work' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 58). The unveiling of the power of these hegemonic discourses is what makes Faircloughian discourse analysis critical.

An order of discourse should be considered an open system that can be changed by a communicative event. According to Fairclough (1995), communicative events – such as a speech during an EU Presidency – can be defined quite simply as the use of language in a particular context. They can be divided into three categories: (1) *social, political and economic context*, (2) *discourse practice* and (3) *text*, which should be understood as three separate analyses merged into a single model used to analyse a communicative event (Fairclough, 1995, p. 59). This means that economic interests, political ideologies and social circumstances cannot be separated from the use of language in a given communicative event. Discursive practice comprises the discourses and genres articulated in the production and consumption of a text, whereas the context is the relationship between these discourses and the existing orders of discourse and, implicitly, their social consequences.

The relationship between the orders of discourse and the discourses struggling to attain hegemony in the communicative event is always dialectic (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 28–29). Hence, the order of discourse places restrictions on the content of the communicative event, while at the same time communicative events compete to change or influence the order of discourse. Exchanges between orders of discourse can be the centre of attention in discourse analyses. Alternatively, choosing a single order can help delimit the analysis so that only the competing discourses within it are investigated. The latter alternative is chosen in this article. What is essential here is to investigate how the author of a text draws on existing discourses and genres in its production and, likewise, how the recipient draws on existing discourse genres in its consumption and interpretation.

A further distinction can be drawn between the *implicit and explicit content of a text*. The implicit content is taken for granted and often viewed as common sense. This shows the importance of intertextuality, which emerges if the text draws directly or indirectly on former texts or communicative events (Fairclough, 1995, p. 8). The explicit content is the textual form, structure and organization of the text on all levels. At the lower levels are vocabulary properties along with the use of metaphors and the construction of identities; at a higher level are the structures of argumentation and the activity type (Fairclough, 1995, p. 7).

The reason for choosing Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis is that it allows us to investigate the relationship between language and the social, political and economic contexts, enabling us to answer our research question using the above-mentioned concepts. We thereby also contribute to an improved understanding of the general phenomenon of European integration and the Member States' role in this, notably their room for manoeuvre during Presidencies.



Data and Methodology

The texts upon which this discourse analysis is based primarily consist of speeches from the three Presidencies (Polish, Danish and Cypriot) made by the Prime Ministers/Presidents and other actors representing the Member States, together with important Presidency speeches¹ by the heads of the European institutions (José Manuel Barroso and Herman Van Rompuy). Various forms of written material (such as Presidency programmes) have also been included in the analysis. Most of the data were collected from the official Presidency websites or from EU or government websites. Only material written in English is included; however, this does not constitute a major problem as today most presidential speeches are held in English, and most of the material produced by presidency actors is translated (see also Halperin and Heath, 2012, p. 314). Basically, we studied all of the material of relevance for the communicative events during the three Presidencies.

Actors from EU institutions are also often discursive actors in the EU Member State Presidencies. One might say that there is an implicit EU order of discourse in the data material, where these actors are important figures. The speeches of Manuel Barroso (then President of the European Commission) and Herman Van Rompuy (then President of the European Council) are therefore coded under the data from the various presidencies, as they draw heavily on the three identified presidency discourses in their speeches and always emphasize a strong, hegemonic ‘more Europe’ discursive approach. In the following, the speeches are labelled with the name of the speaker and the date of the speech. Other forms of material are referred to by their titles.

It is vital to make any assumptions about one’s analytical strategy explicit. When reading the material, we sought to avoid the common criticism of discourse analysis as an ‘anything goes’ methodology. The dimensions of coding were defined by the research question. Here, a number of relevant dimensions have been selected and closely analysed:

1. The particular context of the Presidency.
2. The task.
3. The overall discursive construction of the EU.
4. The priorities and final results.

The analytical procedure consisted of the following steps. First, all speeches and other relevant material from the three Presidencies were gathered. Second, the material was read repeatedly with the research question in mind. Third, the four dimensions slowly crystallized through this implicit inductive process. Fourth, the texts were coded in accordance with the four dimensions. Fifth, metaphors, opposing concepts and other aspects of relevance to the research question were analysed. This method is based on recommendations by Strauss and Corbin (1998, pp. 15–25) about



how to develop grounded theory and concepts, and it also follows the method used by Fairclough (2003) in his actual examples of textual discourse (for example Fairclough's analysis of Tony Blair's speech at the Labour Party Conference in October 2001 in Example 5 in Fairclough (2003)).

The Discursive Practices of the EU Presidencies

The texts investigated in connection with this study were primarily produced by Member State civil servant close to the political actor holding the speech.² Speeches are very important to EU Presidencies and are associated with particular conventions: they are what Fairclough calls a 'genre' (2003, pp. 66–67).

The style of this genre is official and formal, although often with a personal tone in order for the speakers to capitalize on their self-perceived ethos. This is exemplified by the fact that most of them begin with a formal introduction of the most important people present and by addressing the audience as 'ladies and gentlemen'. Most of the EU Presidency speeches also draw on European history or cite famous Europeans. At the same time, the speeches are quite argumentative in their rhetorical form. An important feature of the texts is that most are somehow interlinked. This is particularly clear in the cases where they comment on speeches held immediately before or on other relevant speeches about the same subject. Intertextuality is frequent in the genre analysed in this article.

The EU order of discourse will be the centre of the analysis as we (in line with the comparative aim of the article) are interested in the competing discourses within it. This is because the rotating Presidencies each articulate a discourse that, in part, draws on an overall 'EU discourse' while at the same time having a distinct structure composed of a number of particular issues. These are categorized here in the four aforementioned dimensions. Through the analysed dimensions, we can determine whether there are competing discourses within the common order of discourse of the three EU Presidencies. The hegemonic 'EU discourse' is articulated very clearly by the actors speaking on behalf of the institutions (that is Barroso and Van Rompuy). They tend to discursively construct the Presidencies as part of the more long-term legislative-political context while at the same time drawing on how Presidency discourses construct the Presidency task and the EU itself.

The discursive actors in the following are (their titles refer to their position at the time of the Presidencies): European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Polish Prime Minister (PM) Donald Tusk, Polish Minister for European and Economic Affairs Mikolaj Dowgielewicz, Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski, Danish PM Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Danish Minister for European Affairs Nicolai Wammen, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Cyprus Androulla Kaminara, Cypriot



President Dimitris Christofias, Cypriot Minister of Foreign Affairs Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis and President of the Cypriot House of Representatives Yiannakis Omirou.

The Polish Presidency Discourse

The context

Generally, the Polish Presidency is constructed as an historical event during which the country was able to demonstrate its belonging to Europe and project its self-image as one of the large, important EU member states (Pomorska and Vanhoonacker, 2012, p. 76). The following quotations partly illustrate this: 'The first rotating Presidency of Poland is an historic event' (Van Rompuy, 2011a). 'The taking over of the Presidency in the Council of European Union by Poland becomes a symbolic moment in the contemporary history of our country' (Komorowski, 2011). The fact that Poland was EU Presidency incumbent for the first time is referred to in the Presidency rhetoric. The construction of a Polish 'we' or identity through the common past also becomes obvious in one of Van Rompuy's speeches (2011b): 'You experienced periods when European values were trampled, your fortune was linked to great conflicts; remember the words of Winston Churchill: "For Poland we had entered the war"' (Van Rompuy, 2011a). Implicitly, the speaker let the audience feel almost as if the traumas of World War II were first overcome when Poland assumed the Council Presidency in 2011.

The Presidency is a symbol of Poland's return to Europe. It is an aim that has now been accomplished. Europe is linguistically constructed as 'the world of the West', characterized by a certain political system that has echoes of a Cold War worldview, as emphasized by the Polish President: 'Twenty years ago, after the breakthrough involving the change of political system, Polish politics focused on what was known as a "return to Europe"' (Komorowski, 2011). The past is the most important backdrop for the Polish Presidency.

The EU's economic crisis, which is the context for the Polish Presidency, is similarly understood in relation to history. This is reflected in the discursive practice of Polish PM Donald Tusk: 'Today's crisis for all those Europeans who had to spend several dozen years living in poverty, in enslavement, seems to be an important challenge, but not a final one, and incomparable with the one which we have overcome thanks to the loyal stance of entire Europe' (Tusk, 2011a). In other words, the current economic crisis is constructed as paling in relation to the spectacular history of Poland (see also the Polish Presidency Programme, 2011). Implicitly, he is also sending a broader message, namely to the southern European member states, about keeping things in perspective. The implicit message conveyed by the liberal-conservative Polish government is that the occasional economic crisis is always preferable to the permanent political crisis of a communist regime.



Presidency task

Komorowski assumes responsibility for the Presidency by stating that it should be viewed as an examination: ‘John Paul II used to say that “Poland needs Europe, while Europe needs Poland”. The time of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union is also an examination of our ability to assume responsibility for Europe’ (Komorowski, 2011). The reference to John Paul II recalls that a Pole has been leader of an important and influential international institution as well as a European healer of relations between the East and the West. In other words, Poland is practically constructed as a precondition for a united Europe. Similarly, Komorowski discursively constructs the common task of the Polish Presidency as a link between citizens, the country and being a European leader, as if the three were interchangeable.

Towards the end of the Polish Presidency, Barroso contemplates how Poland has passed the European examination through a well-executed presidency: ‘... Poland has shown during this Presidency its commitment to Europe, to democracy and to our common values’ (Barroso, 2011). He thus constructs the professional Presidency as proof of the Polish commitment to the EU.

Construction of the EU

The discursive construction of the EU is subdivided into the present and the future of Europe.

Present construction of Europe

Tusk emphasizes that the solution to the crisis is a united, more integrated Europe. This is one of the many EU Presidency speeches that draws on the hegemonic EU discourse that the solution to all European problems is ‘more Europe’: ‘... that the more Europe, the less crisis there will be’ (Tusk, 2011a). ‘More Europe’ and ‘less crisis’ have been discursively linked in most public speeches by European political actors in power during the economic crisis (the social, political and economic backdrop for all three Presidencies) from 2008 onwards, thereby drawing on and reaffirming the hegemonic EU discourse.

It is part of the hegemonic EU discourse to use the EU and Europe as synonyms, and Komorowski accordingly constructs Europe as an historical project, using repetition to emphasize his point: ‘A political and civilizational project which was to unite Europe, a project allowing for better lives, better today and better tomorrow’ (Komorowski, 2011). Similarly, Tusk constructs the EU through its activities, though always with reference to the hegemonic EU discourse that the solution is ‘more Europe’: ‘More Europe means very practical decisions, more Europe means wiser spending of European money, more Europe means European institutions capable of



taking decisions, more Europe means more European policy, more European leadership' (Tusk, 2011a). Moreover, Komorowski discursively constructs a link between peace and more integration (again a reference to the hegemonic EU discourse), which makes it impossible to argue against more integration without risking peace (Komorowski, 2011).

The future of Europe

Tusk envisages the future of Europe by discursively constructing the future as a very simple choice between more or less Europe: 'Indeed, we have to say it very openly – we are at a crossroads. We face a very serious choice: to go along the Community way during this crisis, looking for methods and ways to overcome this crisis, searching for a European way to do so' (Tusk, 2011b). His wording creates opposites, as seen in 'community', 'overcome', 'European way', 'best way' versus 'national', 'egoism', 'regardless' and 'burden'. This creates a discursive connection between the first and last words: Tusk attributes the former characteristics to the notion of a future with 'more Europe', and the latter characteristics to a future with 'less Europe'.

Similarly, he indicates the wrong choice ('less Europe') using metaphors such as 'illness' and 'crisis in our hearts', which stands in opposition to the right choice ('more Europe'): 'Too many people in Europe, too many politicians in Europe, want to persuade us and Europe that abandoning the Community action is the way to overcome the crisis. The view I and the Polish Presidency share is that this is a symptom of some illness ... the crisis is not only in our banks, but also in our hearts' (Tusk, 2011b). In other words, not being in favour of 'more Europe' signals heartlessness. Obviously, this is an attempt to fundamentally delegitimize the 'less Europe' discourse. In addition, he underlines the importance of the constructed choice for the future: 'But if we fail to live up to this task, future generations will blame not only the crisis, but also us' (Tusk, 2011b). In short, according to Tusk's construction of the future of Europe, 'future generations' are also in favour of 'more Europe'. This is especially the case in the present context. The future is also on the side of the hegemonic EU discourse.

Priorities and results

The Polish Presidency had three main priorities (Polish Presidency Programme, 2011, p. 5):

- European integration as a source of growth: Multiannual financial framework and deepening the single market.
- Secure Europe: Food security, external energy policy and CAP.
- Europe benefiting from openness: Eastern partnership, enlargement and trade.



The motto for the Polish Presidency further attested to how Poland subscribed to the hegemonic discourse in the EU: 'More Europe in Europe' (Tusk, 2011b).

According to Mikolaj Marek Dowgielewicz, Minister for European and Economic Affairs, Poland achieved the following six concrete results (Dowgielewicz, 2011):

- Six-pack containing a set of financial and budgetary regulations aimed at curbing the economic crisis.
- Report on sources of economic growth.
- Launch of the negotiations on the multiannual financial framework.
- Finalizing accession negotiations with Croatia.
- Developing a neighbourhood policy.
- Progress in institutional matters.

He continues, stating that the Polish Presidency: '... proved the significance of cooperation and the functioning of the Community Method The overall motive behind Poland's EU Council Presidency efforts is an "ever closer Union"'.³ Dowgielewicz argues that functional results were achieved but that they were driven by the ulterior motive of 'more Europe'. Again, the overarching 'more Europe' discourse shines through.

Tusk develops Komorowski's point further: after the Polish Presidency, Europe's common task can be envisaged by the image of 'young Poles' at work throughout Europe, both in the EU cities and elsewhere (Tusk, 2011b). During the French campaign before the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, Polish plumbers migrating to France in their thousands became a nightmare scenario (Nedergaard, 2009, p. 46; Jensen and Nedergaard, 2012). Tusk now turns this upside down by stressing the specific Polish discursive approach within the general order of discourse that Poland and Europe are strongly interlinked; that is, that Europe without Poland is not Europe. The Polish context is thus made clear.

The Danish Presidency Discourse

Context

Generally, the economic crisis is constructed as the all-important social, political and economic context of the Danish Presidency, as stated both by Herman Van Rompuy and PM Helle Thorning-Schmidt: 'Ladies and Gentlemen – Europe is in a crisis. But we are in it together. And we must act together if we are to overcome the crisis. This is the point of departure for the Danish Presidency' (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012a). Similarly, Minister of European Affairs, Nikolai Wammen, uses metaphors to describe the current context of the economic crisis: 'There is an old proverb saying that a calm sea does not make a skilled sailor. Ireland and Denmark are both proud



seafaring nations with many skilled and experienced sailors' (Wammen, 2012). In other words, the Danish Presidency has the ability to tackle Europe's problems (Europe is once more used here as a synonym for the EU), especially since, in comparative terms, Denmark has not been hit as severely as other countries by the economic crisis.

Van Rompuy and Thorning-Schmidt continue to construct the common solution by juxtaposing phrases such as 'we will overcome', 'cooperate, compromise and align', with 'acting alone', which is discursively linked to 'uncoordinated, individual': 'At the start of the year, let me also make a more general remark on how we will overcome the debt crisis. It will be hard and continuous work' (Van Rompuy, 2012a). 'The European debt crisis cannot be handled by any individual Member State acting alone and uncoordinated. To handle the crisis, Member States must cooperate, make compromises and align their different capabilities in order to achieve maximum firepower ... the way forward goes through enhanced co-ordination, stronger common rules and more joint action' (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012b). In other words, the EU member states cannot overcome the common challenge of the economic crisis unless they cooperate and coordinate activities.

Presidency task

When analysing the challenges and tasks of the Danish Presidency, Wammen makes a discursive connection between the crisis and the Presidency as offering practical solutions to the problems arising from it. In the light of the social context, he emphasizes 'concrete results' and 'tangible benefits' (Wammen, 2012). 'It is my firm belief that the best way to counter this public perception is for the European Union to achieve concrete results that deliver tangible benefits to the daily life of Europe's citizens' (Wammen, 2012). 'Tangible results' seems to be a primarily Danish Presidency adaptation of the hegemonic 'more Europe' discourse. This is also in keeping with the Danish government's ethos of being pragmatic, politically centre-oriented and forward-looking. The past is not important.

Van Rompuy constructs Denmark as an experienced country: 'Your country has long-standing experience in exercising the role of the EU Presidency, which it is now doing for the seventh time already' (Van Rompuy, 2012a). The fact that the Danish Presidency is so experienced is exploited rhetorically. Moreover, Thorning-Schmidt and Wammen both depict the Presidency task as one of steering the EU like a ship (cf. Wammen's sailor metaphor above): 'We will do our utmost in the coming months to provide a steady hand in order to help our common European ship navigate through rocky waters' (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012c). This metaphor expresses the idea that all Europeans are passengers on the same ship.



Finally, Thorning-Schmidt draws on a particular construction of Danish history to construct the task of the Danish Presidency as one of ‘bridge-building’: ‘Thanks to Denmark’s particular history in the EU – being a small country outside the Eurozone with a fixed-exchange rate *vis-à-vis* the Euro – our Presidency is well placed to act as a bridge-builder’ (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012b). Here, it is implied that bridges over troubled water are needed and possible.

Construction of the EU

Again, the construction of the EU is subdivided into the present and future.

Present construction of Europe

When speaking about the EU, Thorning-Schmidt draws on historical figures such as Vaclav Havel, Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman to construct contemporary Europe as a place of ‘liberty, creativity, rule of law, democracy, progress, integration, unity, dream/hope/necessity’. In other words, she discursively links ‘European history’ with the need for ‘European unity’. By bringing in historical persons, she deploys intertextuality to construct modern-day Europe as a result of its past (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012d; 2012e). Behind her argument is a form of strong path dependency. It is also an implicit way of supporting the hegemonic ‘more Europe’ discourse.

Moreover, in her discursive practice, Thorning-Schmidt constructs the EU in terms of ‘growth’, ‘progress’, ‘optimism’, ‘vision’ and ‘uniqueness’ by drawing on an historical construction of European myth. She does this by utilizing intertextual references and disclosing her own ethos, thereby discursively constructing her own identity. The terms ‘gloom and pessimism’ are used as a foil for her positive account: ‘I belong to a European generation that was young in the eighties We were sometimes described as “the No Future generation” Out of the gloom and pessimism came an era of growth, progress and optimism’ (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012d). In other words, ‘No Future’ is discursively transformed into ‘Future’ through ‘Europe’. ‘More Europe’ gave her a future. Here, we glimpse her own personal ethos behind the hegemonic EU discourse.

During the same communicative event, when speaking about European identity, Thorning-Schmidt personifies the EU as an institution. This is expressed through metaphors about a ‘helping hand’ and a ‘voice’. Personification is a rhetorical means that makes the EU institution appear more familiar – almost human or mother-like – through its ascribed human attributes: ‘[Europe is] a helping hand under the weak and vulnerable’ (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012d). First and foremost, Thorning-Schmidt taps into the overall EU discourse and constructs the solution to the crisis as ‘more Europe’: ‘The path out of this crisis goes through more Europe, not less Europe’



(Thorning-Schmidt, 2012d). ‘More Europe’ is again the key word reflecting the hegemonic EU discourse.

The future of Europe

Thorning-Schmidt proceeds to construct the future purpose of the EU as ‘playing a role in world affairs’ because it enables the Member States to compete and prosper. This is done through manifesting intertextuality: ‘One of the greatest European statesmen still alive, Helmut Schmidt, has a sound perspective on where we are In his speech to the SPD party convention last year, he said: “Each one of Europe’s nation states will constitute no more than a fraction of 1 per cent of the world’s population in 2050” This is the clear-cut answer to all those who question the purpose of the European Union’ (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012c). ‘More Europe’ has become a simple demographic necessity, as the Danish PM adopts Helmut Schmidt’s words.

Priorities and results

The Danish Presidency was quick to present four priorities (Danish Presidency Programme, 2012, p. 5):

1. A responsible Europe: fiscal discipline and economic stability, multiannual financial framework.
2. A dynamic Europe: growth and employment, single market, labour market, trade.
3. A green Europe: green growth, climate and energy.
4. A safe Europe: asylum and migration policy, terrorism, cross-border crime, EEAS.⁴

Growth is constructed as the overarching aim, and the priorities make clear how this goal can be attained. In hindsight, a text evaluating the Danish Presidency stated that: ‘The Danish EU Presidency has first and foremost focused on stimulating growth and creating new jobs for Europeans ... to create concrete results for Europe’s citizens and businesses’ (Danish Presidency Evaluation, 2012, p. 5).

The evaluation of the Danish Presidency emphasized the importance of tangible results – not least due to the context of the presidency. These are very important in the discursive construction of the EU as a functional project, and the presidency as a functional task requiring tangible results in order to be credible and complete: ‘The Danish Presidency was the only one to produce a report on the results of the Presidency. It is no less than 50 pages long and includes an appendix of all results listed – about 250’ (Danish Presidency Evaluation, 2012). It was the Danish Presidency discourse that paved the way for this text.



The 'politics by results' was clear from the beginning: 'The Danish Presidency will work tirelessly during the next six months to ensure that the EU continues to produce tangible, useful results' (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012d).

In another communicative event, the Danish PM constructed a discursive connection between 'hard work', 'focus', 'results' and 'get out of the crisis'; as if the former would naturally lead to the latter: 'We need to work hard. We need to focus. We need to get results. We need to get out of the crisis' (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012c). Again, by the end of the Presidency: 'Tangible results are also what the Danish Presidency has been all about for the past six months' (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012f).

The specific achievements of the Danish Presidency were (Thorning-Schmidt, 2012f):

- Regulation of the so-called 'roaming charges' that operators can charge for using mobile phone services or the Internet outside one's country.
- European system of standardization in which specifications or procedures for products are agreed upon.
- Establishment of a Connecting Europe Facility focusing on the investment in, and spread of, high-speed broadband Internet and access to digital service.
- Implementation of the first full European Semester, which surveys the economic situation in the respective Member States and comes up with suggestions for improvement.
- Energy efficiency directive, which provides a framework for measuring and improving energy efficiency.
- Agreement to slash sulphur emissions with the view to reducing overall emissions, especially from shipping.

Again, the focus is on the 'concreteness' of the results against the backdrop of the social, political and economic context. This focus is a consequence of the Danish Presidency discourse, and it characterizes the discursive practice of the Danish Presidency.

The Cypriot Presidency Discourse

Context

It is of key importance for Cypriot actors to construct Cyprus as a truly European country, even though it is situated at Europe's periphery. This is especially the case given the political context of the island's division and the fact that Turkey had previously stated that it would not cooperate with the Council during the Cypriot Presidency (Christou, 2013, p. 80). Cypriot President Christofias frames his country's history as linked to broader European history, stating that Cyprus has



‘historical ties with mainland Europe’ and constructing it as the last ‘bastion of Europe’. This stands in contrast to the Polish case, where the Presidency was constructed as a return to Europe. He underlines this point with reference to a historical event: ‘Undoubtedly, Cyprus since the Middle Ages has been the last bastion of Europe in the Eastern Mediterranean’ (Christofias, 2012a). As in the case of Poland (and unlike Denmark – except for the sailor metaphor), the past is an important backdrop for the Cypriot Presidency.

Van Rompuy is aware of concerns about the division of the island, which is why – at a communicative event that occurred before the Cypriot Presidency started – he explicitly constructs an image of the Cypriot people based on what they have in common: they are all ‘citizens of the island’ and have a shared political life with each other and the rest of Europe (Van Rompuy, 2012b).

The context of the Cypriot Presidency is important. It took place during the worst financial crisis experienced by Cyprus, which, immediately after having handed the chair to the Irish Presidency in 2013, forced the government to take severe measures (Christou, 2013, p. 80). Referring to the crisis as the current economic context, the Cypriot Presidency publication makes it clear that Europe will overcome this: ‘The European Union can emerge stronger from the current crisis and reinstate its place on the international scene’ (Cypriote Presidency Programme, 2012, p. 1). Furthermore, Christofias constructs the crisis in socio-economic terms, meaning that it is economic as well as social. The expression that ‘social cohesion’ has been ‘threatened’ implies that this is the more serious of the two aspects: ‘It seems as though the ongoing socio-economic crisis, largely deriving from the global economic crisis, is the greatest challenge that the European Union has ever faced. This is because the Union’s prosperity and social cohesion have been significantly threatened’ (Christofias, 2012b). In contrast to both the Polish and Danish discursive actors, Christofias explicitly stresses the social aspects of the economic crisis. Implicitly, he is hereby discursively attempting to balance the hegemonic ‘more Europe’ discourse with more social (and distributive solidarity) content, which is probably also in Cyprus’ interests. As mentioned at the beginning of the article, however, although there is a connection between interests and discourses, we assume that discourses are relatively autonomous. This social content is the *leitmotif* of the Cypriot Presidency discourse.

Presidency task

Christofias constructs Cyprus’ task as a functional one, articulating the Presidency as brokerage in the phrase: ‘By strictly adhering to the role of “honest broker”’ (Christofias, 2012d). This functional articulation of Cyprus’ task is further strengthened using the wording ‘community method’ (cf. footnote 5 above): ‘It is important to underline that during all these months the Presidency has faithfully followed the Community Method respectfully’ (Christofias, 2012d). As already mentioned,



however, this does not mean that Cyprus lacks clear political aims. Yiannakis Omirou, President of the Cypriot House of Representatives, sees their first Presidency as a completion of the country's EU membership. He underlines this statement with the phrase 'fulfilment of role'. He also taps into the hegemonic 'more Europe' discourse (which he referred to as 'deepening European unification') (Omirou, 2012).

Finally, the Presidency is constructed as a common task through the use of the deictic 'we' – the 'we' that can be referred to in a speech situation. This implies that EU assistance will be required: 'We are all in this together. It will not be easy, but together we can do this; it can be done' (Christofias, 2012c). Christofias repeats what the communicative actors from the other Trio Member States have already said (cf. above).

Construction of the EU

Present construction of Europe

The Head of the European Commission in Cyprus, Androulla Kaminara uses a 'beating heart' metaphor to make the Presidency seem humane (cf. also Thorning-Schmidt above): 'During the six months of the Presidency, the heart of Europe will be beating in Cyprus' (Kaminara, 2011). Christofias makes reference to Europe as 'our home': 'Cyprus shall try ... to make Europe our home, a better Europe' (Christofias, 2012c).

In addition, Christofias constructs a common European cultural heritage by referring to ancient Greek philosophy. In other words, he creates intertextuality with Cypriot/Greek texts in order to construct Europe itself as something good – something that 'leaves us in a better place': 'In Plato's *Republic* (*Politeia*), Socrates, the great philosopher of antiquity, asks: "What is the meaning of life?" And Socrates answers directly: "To be a good Athenian". "What makes a good Athenian, Socrates?" Plato asks again. The answer, dear friends, was simple, timeless and full of meaning: "The good Athenian is the one who leaves Athens a better place than he found it ...". The Athens of Socrates and Plato is today our common accomplishment, the European Union' (Christofias, 2012b). Here, Christofias – through intertextuality – lends credibility to his current project by invoking ancient Greece. In general, ancient history and the history of the Middle Ages are significant features of the Cypriot Presidency's discursive practice.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Erato Kozakou-Marcoulli, constructs Europe as a project of unification, expressed through enlargement policy. This is evident in a speech about 'peace and freedom, democracy, and the rule of law': 'The process of enlargement itself is clearly one of our most successful policies; on the one hand, it showcases the emphasis the Union ascribes to the common European values of peace and freedom, democracy and the rule of law ...' (Kozakou-Marcoullis, 2012).



Hence, Cyprus also wants to promote the enlargement process. For Cyprus, 'more Europe' also means a larger Europe.

The future of Europe

When speaking about the future of Europe, both Christofias and Omirou call for a social Europe. Generally, 'more Europe' for the Cypriot Presidency is a 'more social Europe'. From the very beginning of the Cypriot Presidency, Christofias discursively creates a link between integration and solidarity/social cohesion, which is ultimately constructed as the solution to the European socio-economic crisis: 'The deepening of European integration goes hand-in-hand with solidarity and social cohesion and is, in my opinion, the best way to effectively address the current socio-economic crisis' (Christofias, 2012b). Omirou adds that Cyprus has 'the goal of creating an effective, solidarity-based, social Europe' (Omirou, 2012). Owing to the economic context of Southern Europe, the 'more Europe' discourse becomes a 'more social Europe' discourse: the context and discourse are thus linked.

Christofias constructs a 'free market model' and 'safeguards for the social' as diametrical opposites. By saying 'it can hardly be denied', he takes it to be a given that the free market model has failed. He supports this statement by arguing that the model 'drains welfare' and 'limits growth': 'The austerity-only policies drain the state's welfare and limit growth' (Christofias, 2012b). Once more, this represents an implicit criticism of the lack of a social dimension in the hegemonic 'more Europe' discourse manifest in the proposed solutions to the Eurozone crisis thus far. At the same time, this also reflects the left-wing character of the Cypriot government.

Similarly, Christofias makes use of *pathos* and *ethos* to once again underline the need for a social solution to the socio-economic crisis he describes: 'Allow me, dear friends, to express my deep shock each time images of suffering people are shown on television ...' (Christofias, 2012b). He adds: 'I will be the happiest person in Europe if, by the end of the Cyprus Presidency, tangible results from this programme are produced or if we adopt measures with an equivalent effect ... thereby reducing this important social problem as much as possible' (Christofias, 2012b). The 'more Europe' discourse should become a 'more social Europe' discourse. These are 'tangible results' from the Cypriot perspective, which are a very different kind of tangible results than those referred to by the Danish Presidency.

Priorities and results

The Cypriot Presidency had four main priorities, according to its official publication (Cypriote Presidency Programme, 2012, p. 2):

1. A more efficient and sustainable Europe: a multiannual financial framework, agricultural and fisheries policy, integrated maritime policy.



2. A better performing and growth-based European economy: economic governance, internal market, financial services regulatory framework.
3. A more citizen-relevant Europe, with solidarity and social cohesion: measures to tackle youth employment, poverty and social exclusion; and asylum policy.
4. Europe in the world, closer to its neighbours: a Southern dimension to neighbourhood policy.

Referring to these priorities, Christofias and Kozakou-Marcoullis both emphasize how social cohesion and solidarity – working towards a ‘better Europe’ – are their main priorities: ‘We must work towards a Better Europe, with more efficient policies, a better performing economy and fairer distribution of wealth. A Europe based on growth, solidarity and social cohesion’ (Christofias, 2012c). Implicitly, the Cypriot position is to work for a more social Europe, as ‘more Europe’ is not a ‘better Europe’ without being a ‘more social Europe’. Again, Cyprus subscribes to the hegemonic ‘more Europe’ discourse, but with a social flavour.

Five results of the Cypriot Presidency are worth particular mention:

- A single supervisory mechanism – a first step towards banking union by creating a system whereby banks are monitored by the European Central Bank and national authorities.
- Two-pack regulations aimed at improving the transparency and coordination of national budgetary decisions.
- A European Unitary Patent, which creates a supranational patent and court to support its functioning.
- Progress on Asylum, Fisheries and the Multiannual Financial Framework.

None of these results was specifically ‘social’ in character. Moreover, Kaminara’s construction of the Presidency as a Cypriot event suggests Cypriot benefits: ‘It will be a unique opportunity for the country to promote its cultural and touristic image. And this is a long-term benefit that may arise from the exercise of the Presidency’ (Kaminara, 2011). Implicitly, the Presidency is also seen as PR, according to the Cypriot Presidency. This feature is absent from both the Polish and Danish Presidency discourses.

Comparison of the Trio’s Discourses and Conclusion

The underlying premise of this article is that discursive practice is a reflection of, and active contributor to, the reproduction of the EU’s social and political order.

In this article, this can be summarized as follows: EU institutions and Member States, including the rotating Presidencies, articulate discourses that belong to a European order of discourses, which is institutionally embedded in Brussels because of the fact that the EU institutions are situated there. This is the hegemonic EU



discourse, which determines which European policies are possible. Each Presidency has a platform from where it can attempt to expand its room for manoeuvre using more or less conscious discursive strategies. A further insight here is that the discursive room for manoeuvre is more affected by EU discourse than is the case with 'normal' Member State policy-making, as the EU discourse emerging from Brussels has a hegemonic status *vis-à-vis* discourses about the EU in the individual Member States; hence, Member State discourses are not a 'pure' reflection of interest and ideology.

Table 1 summarizes the key order of discourse for each of the three Presidencies. The 'categorical imperative' of the hegemonic order of discourse is that EU Member State problems should always be solved through 'more Europe'. The three Presidencies each define 'more Europe' differently, however, which to a certain extent reflects the three Member State governments' respective political ideologies and interests: Poland (liberal-conservative), Denmark (social democratic and centre-oriented), and Cyprus (left-leaning). One implication of this is that voters can actually influence the Presidency discourses of the EU Member States through elections.

More deeply embedded cultural differences are also evident, as the Polish and Cypriot Presidencies stress the past, whereas the Danish Presidency emphasizes the future. These cultural differences are significant, and are partly mediated by the size of the country, which also affects how the main task of the Presidency in question is depicted. Poland perceives the Presidency as an 'examination', which it must pass, preferably with distinction, in order to demonstrate that it is an important country with leadership aspirations. Denmark has more modest ambitions, wishing to be judged on tangible results. Finally, Cyprus is aware of its own inadequacies, discursively constructing its own role as that of a broker.

All three Presidencies construct the present and future of Europe as a marriage between government ideology and cultural factors. Poland constructs 'more Europe' as a moral imperative, whereas Denmark articulates it as an instrument for solving the current economic hardship, and Cyprus emphasizes the importance of the social dimension. Similar differences become apparent when comparing how the three Presidencies articulate their priorities and results. Poland stresses how Europe should work to secure freedom and that the country has demonstrated its integral role in this process; Denmark argues that green growth is the remedy for the crisis and that it has delivered clear results in this regard; and Cyprus emphasizes how the EU is based on solidarity and that the country, though on the geographical periphery of Europe, belongs to its heart.

In the period between 2010 and 2012, through their functioning as communicative events, the three EU Presidencies try to change, 'fill' or adapt this general discourse in order to exploit it for their own benefit, while at the same time (normally) showing that the Presidency discourse is aligned with hegemonic EU discourse. The article has thus unveiled some of the dialectic mechanisms of the EU Presidency discourses. The overall hegemonic EU discourse in the analysed time period may basically be described as follows: 'More Europe and more European integration is the only way

**Table 1:** Comparison of the trio's discourses

<i>Analytical dimensions/ country</i>	<i>Polish Presidency</i>	<i>Danish Presidency</i>	<i>Cypriot Presidency</i>
Key order of discourse:	'More Europe' safeguards freedom and democracy	'More Europe' through tangible results	'More Europe' through more solidarity and social cohesion
The context	An historic event. Poland's return to Europe. Backdrop: the past. This is more important than the economic crisis.	Europe's crisis must be overcome by Europe working together. Backdrop: the future. Denmark is capable of leading this process.	First Presidency in the 'last bastion of Europe'. Backdrop: the past. A divided island, but the Presidency represents all its inhabitants in the midst of an economic and social crisis.
Presidency task	An examination of Poland's ability to be part of Europe (resulting in a 'pass' grade). Poland should be a European leader.	To go for tangible results based on experience (7th Presidency). Can act as a bridge-builder between euro- and non-euro Member States.	Presidency as brokerage. Deepening European unification.
Construction of the EU: Specific construction of Europe	'More Europe' is the solution to the problems, combined with wise spending and leadership, and is a precondition for peace.	European history calls for European unity. 'More Europe' will lead it out of the crisis.	Make Europe – our home – a better place. The EU as the Athens of today.
Construction of the EU: The future of Europe	Two choices for the future: the 'European way' vs. 'egoism'. 'More Europe' vs. 'heartlessness'. Future generations favour 'more Europe'.	Europe has no future in a world without a strong EU.	A social Europe with more solidarity and social cohesion.
Priorities	Priorities are constructed as freedom and 'more community' as inseparable aspects.	Growth and environmentalism are constructed as one thing.	Priorities are constructed as combined solidarity and growth.
Results	It has been demonstrated that Europe without Poland is not Europe and an 'ever closer union'.	Results are constructed as 'tangible results'.	Cyprus is constructed as a well-known place.



out of the economic crisis'. This discourse occurs in dialectic interaction with the three key orders of discourse of the three analysed Presidencies.

The comparison of the respective Trio member discourses has three implications. First, it underscores the importance of analysing not only the organizational and behavioural aspects of the Presidencies but also the discursive dimension. Second, and connected to this, future studies could build on existing studies or conduct new ones that link the three dimensions to establish whether they are aligned. Some tentative evidence suggests that, in the case of Denmark, the organizational structure was very modest but highly efficient and the plenipotentiaries behaved in a very business-like manner, underscoring the point concerning 'tangible results'. In contrast, Poland's organizational structure was very comprehensive but effective, and the plenipotentiaries behaved like key players in the EU supporting the discourse about the importance of Poland and its return to Europe. Third, it would be instructive to examine more Trio Presidencies to determine whether support for the 'more Europe' discourse is a general pattern but attaches a different meaning to it, depending on the political colour of the government and the historical trajectory of the Member State in question.

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Notes

- 1 The links to the speeches were accessed in March–August 2013. A list of the links referred to in the following can be sent upon request.
- 2 This is in contrast to the speeches held in the various Council of Minister formations, which are normally written to a large degree by the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.
- 3 The Community Method is the EU's usual decision-making method whereby the Commission makes a proposal to the Council and Parliament who then debate it, propose amendments and eventually adopt it as EU law.
- 4 EEAS is the new EU Foreign Service, the 'European External Action Service'.

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